



**WAFIC** WESTERN AUSTRALIAN  
FISHING INDUSTRY  
COUNCIL INC

## An Open Letter to the Premier and WA Government

Dear Premier

Everyone wants sustainable supplies of demersal fish in WA waters, but the decision announced last week has gone too far.

Commercial fishing remains an economic pillar of WA and many regional coastal towns, contributing to jobs, economic diversification, food security and social identity – all key priorities for the Cook Government.

The decision to permanently close the stretch of coast from Kalbarri to Augusta to commercial demersal fishing from 1 January is a devastating blow for many local fishing families. In a cost-of-living crisis, thousands of West Australians who rely on the fishing industry are now approaching Christmas not knowing how they'll earn a living in the new year, pay their mortgages or feed their families.

This decision comes at a significant financial and emotional cost, not just to our commercial fishers, but to the fish retailers, processors, transport operators, ice plants, marine shops, ship repairers, tourism operators, food outlets and many more who rely on our industry.

For the WA community, it means no longer seeing local, fresh fish on the menu at their local eatery – and for those who don't fish, it means losing access altogether to a resource that belongs to everyone.

WA's commercial fishing operations are among the most regulated and monitored in the world. We have seen other jurisdictions successfully recover fish stocks through smart, adaptive management without destroying their local fishing industries. South Australia, Tasmania, and international examples all show there are better ways than to simply shut down the industry.

**Premier, this is not reform – this is unfair and deeply damaging.**

The licence buyback scheme announced is not enough to compensate the family businesses who have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in licences, vessels and equipment built up over generations, and who will no longer have an income.

As Minister for Agriculture, Minister Jarvis lobbied Canberra for increased compensation for WA sheep farming families in response to the Federal Government's live export ban. As Minister for Forestry, she has overseen the rollout of the \$80 million Native Forest Transition Plan to support workers, businesses and communities affected by ending native logging. We call on her to demonstrate the same support for our industry.

We believe genuine, collaborative discussions could deliver solutions that protect both fish stocks and the communities that depend on them. That's all we're asking for: fairness, transparency and a seat at the table.

We urge your government to come back to the table to better understand the full impacts of this decision, and we seek an urgent meeting with you to discuss a pause, rather than permanent ban, on commercial fishing to allow constructive engagement with industry to take place.

Premier, we ask you to stand with us in shaping a sustainable future for our fisheries while preserving the communities, jobs and industry that have supported this State for generations.

Yours sincerely